



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

is peculiar, since they are not otherwise mentioned. But in similes of this form the word following *swa* is a constant source of trouble in the text. Thus we have at 21, 12 *swa þær weax*; at 36, 19 *swa ðer smec*; at 45, 3 *swa þær muntas*, which are variously emended, because *þær* cannot be retained without damage to the sense. But I note also the more intelligible *swa þes spearuwa* 10 Introd. and *swa þes wyrm* 21, 5, which are also odd: the sparrow for instance, is only casually mentioned in the psalm following. As it is difficult to believe in the regular corruption of a phrase as common as *swa swa*, it seems possible that the author used a form of the demonstrative *þes* in all these cases, and scribes, puzzled by the lack of an antecedent, have patched the phrase. Note *þær* for *þæs* at 23, 3, and the converse in 48, 19.

KENNETH SISAM.

Oxford.

## MADAME DE STAËL'S LITERARY REPUTATION IN AMERICA

Madame de Staël-Holstein's treatise *De l'Allemagne* is a work of such high historical importance that in our day it completely overshadows her earlier productions. Some of us cannot help feeling that her great book about Germany must have astonished the literary world and instantly and abruptly brought its author glorious renown. As a matter of fact, however, few even among the romanticists awoke to find themselves grown famous over night, and the Baronne de Staël was far from being one of those few. From her cradle she was a person of distinction. Her progress toward artistic eminence was steady and gradual over a period of more than twenty years. Even in America, where according to some authorities her *De l'Allemagne* introduced the glaring culture of Middle Europe, her name was known and respected long before the appearance of her most pretentious work. Indeed it seems likely that the *Germany* owed no small part of its vogue with American readers to the established renown of its author.

In America as in England Madame de Staël's fame was partly due to her influential friendships. Her acquaintance with Jefferson, for example, must have tended to encourage the distribution of her books in the United States, for he held and expressed a high opinion of her literary ability. Of this fact we have proof in a letter which he wrote to her in 1807: "I shall read with great pleasure whatever comes from your pen, having known its powers

when I was in a situation to judge, nearer at hand, the talents which directed it.”<sup>1</sup>

While her literary reputation in America was no doubt considerably affected by her friendships with Americans, it may be estimated fairly accurately from the evidence which is to be found in the impersonal pages of contemporary magazines and reviews. Though writers for American periodicals in the first decade of the nineteenth century looked somewhat askance at the emotional extravagances of the eloquent *Parisienne*, they described her in no unsympathetic fashion. In the *Port Folio* for August, 1808, for instance, there was a long letter from Geneva concerning the Necker family and especially the financier's daughter.<sup>2</sup> The correspondent declared that Madame de Staël lacked the modesty of her mother, Madame Necker, but in the succeeding sentence he presented facts by way of extenuation of the defect: “Like her parents, Madame de Staël has always been attracted to literary pursuits, and to the company and conversation of men of letters; her mind, however, had not been formed in the walks of private life, nor tried by adversity, and her wit, her love of amusement, a flow of spirits, and the pride of knowledge, have borne her away as the horses of the sun did Phæton.” The sketch is not without quaint details: “Placing herself very much at her ease, with her feet resting upon an opposite chair, she ran on in a flow of lively conversation. She speaks, I think, even better than she writes, and is never at a loss for the happiest expressions, colouring everything after a manner peculiar to herself, and deviating, at times, into anecdotes and descriptions, which might offend your chaster ears on the other side of the Atlantick.” Although the letter was written in 1804, at a time when *Delphine* was still “her principal work,” its criticism was in general commendatory: “The writings of Madame de S. bespeak an ardent imagination, a warm heart, and a considerable fund of various literature: she writes, in general, from accurate observation, or where her means of information fail, she guesses more happily than most people.” The anonymous critic prophesied with remarkable clearness Madame de Staël's next literary production, the important novel, *Corinne*: “Her intended

<sup>1</sup> *North American Review*, vol. CCVIII, No. 752 (July, 1918), p. 65; letter dated July 16, 1807, in “Unpublished Correspondence of Madame de Staël with Thomas Jefferson,” by Marie G. Kimball.

<sup>2</sup> N.[2d]s., vol. VI, pp. 113-121.

tour in Italy, next winter, too, will probably furnish her with material for an interesting work, and particularly so, if she submit to what she supposes a very inferior department of literature, and would simply convey to her readers, the impressions made upon her cultivated mind, but the probability is, that some Italian romance, at best, will be the fruit of all those means and opportunities of information, which high rank and a splendid fortune so easily procure this somewhat whimsical lady, who, as a writer, prefers fiction to sober truth, and the imaginary crosses and intricacies of an idle love story, to all the beauties of history, or the interests of courts."

This characterization of Madame de Staël as primarily a fanciful writer of fiction did not accord with the typical American view of her. Long before the appearance of this gossiping letter, though not before it was written, she was known as the editor of the *Manuscrits de M. Necker*. This decidedly serious book was reviewed rather extensively in the *Monthly Anthology* for December, 1805.<sup>3</sup> Not only was the work reviewed, but under the title of "Character of Necker by his daughter Madame de Staël" several pages of a translation of her prefatory essay were printed in the *Literary Magazine and American Register*.<sup>4</sup> When *Corinne*, her best novel, found its way to America, as it did only a few months after its publication, she was so well known that the author of "Observations on Madame de Staël's *Corinna*" for the *Monthly Anthology* could begin by remarking: "The name of Madame de Staël has long been familiar in French Literature." And although he kept the American prejudice against prose fiction as an immoral genre, he was willing to declare that "*Corinna* is a novel engrafted on a journey and description of Italy, and the licentious fashion of blending fancy and reality is more innocent and justifiable in this kind of work than in any other."<sup>5</sup>

Like her *Corinne* (1807), her edition of the *Lettres et pensées du Maréchal Prince de Ligne* (1809) apparently did a great deal to spread the good report of her in America. In the *Port Folio's* review of the work, she is merely mentioned as "the ingenious

<sup>3</sup> *The Monthly Anthology and Boston Review*, II, 615-621.

<sup>4</sup> Vol. IV, pp. 421-428 (July-Dec., 1805); vol. V, pp. 120-128, 273-292 (Jan.-June, 1806).

<sup>5</sup> *The Monthly Anthology*, V, 465-470 (September, 1808).

editor.”<sup>6</sup> But the editor of *Select Reviews* took from the *Literary Panorama* an article whose author has rather more to say of her.<sup>7</sup> He asserts that “some over cautious criticks, knowing the lady’s extraordinary turn of mind; her romantick democracy; her subtle metaphysicks, and her *perfectability of melancholy*, might pause a while, thinking it likely that, notwithstanding her acknowledged talents, the work she has thus ushered before the public, might be a stupendous production of the genuine German school.” From this it would seem that some at least of her readers dreaded and feared the production of just that work upon which her fame is commonly supposed to be almost exclusively founded. In spite of this appearance of foreboding, a reason for the generous reception accorded the *De l’Allemagne* when it finally appeared is suggested by the same critic in another sentence of his review of the *Lettres et pensées*: “The name of the fair author which graces the title page of this publication might, alone, accord a strong presumption in its favour.”

The *De la Littérature* (1800) exerted a belated influence upon the growth of its author’s fame in the New World. In the *Port Folio* for April, 1812, appeared this notice: “Madame de Staël’s work de la Litterature Ancienne et Moderne, which has been suppressed on the continent, will shortly appear.”<sup>8</sup> The efficiency of even such confused and primitive advertising is suggested by the fact that in the following year a translation of the *De la Littérature*, after going through two editions in England, was reprinted in Boston, Massachusetts.<sup>9</sup> To this edition there was prefixed a biographical essay by the translator, M. Boileau, from which the *Universal Magazine*, and from the *Universal Magazine* the editors of *Select Reviews*, borrowed an interesting gossip selection of “Memoirs of Madame de Staël-Holstein.”<sup>10</sup>

In 1813, the year of the publication of *De l’Allemagne*, the *Analectic Magazine* contributed in three ways to the spread of Madame de Staël’s fame in America. In the first place, it published

<sup>6</sup> Ser. 3, vol. II, No. IV, pp. 444-451 (October, 1809).

<sup>7</sup> *Select Reviews and Spirit of the Foreign Magazines*, II, 217-225.

<sup>8</sup> Ser. 3, vol. VII, No. 4, p. 393 (April, 1812). The title mentioned is that of Part I of the treatise.

<sup>9</sup> *The Influence of Literature upon Society* translated from the French of Madame de Staël-Holstein, to which is prefixed a memoir of the Life and Writings of the Author (Boston, 1813).

<sup>10</sup> Vol. VIII, pp. 151-162 (Philadelphia, 1812).

an article by Madame de Staël herself, a rather extensive essay on Female Literature, reprinted from the *Universal Magazine*.<sup>11</sup> It reprinted also an article on British literature "from the Edinburgh Review of Madame de Staël."<sup>12</sup> But more important than either of these was a long original review of *De la Littérature*.<sup>13</sup> Like other early American critics of Madame de Staël, the reviewer deprecated her writing of romances and the low popular taste which made her romances successful. He remarked the fact that the work before him, "on the whole, the best and least exceptionable of all Madame de Staël's publications," was not a new one but had been "brought back into notice by the happier fortune of the novels with which its distinguished author has since condescended to favour this frivolous generation." He praised her intelligently as "beyond all comparison the first female writer of her age." And he perceived the true aim of her critical endeavor: "We are not acquainted, indeed, with any writer who has made such bold and vigorous attempts to carry the generalizing spirit of true philosophy into the history of literature and manners."

A conservative conclusion from the evidence presented in these few pages is that Madame de Staël, the author, was known, understood, and appreciated in America before the publication of her *De l'Allemagne*. It is not unfair to assume that the general esteem for her earlier works made American readers favorably inclined toward her monumental opus. Certainly it was heralded very favorably in the spring of 1814. For the *Analectic Magazine* reprinted from the *Edinburgh Review* Sir James Mackintosh's two most commendatory essays concerning Madame de Staël, the review of her *Réflexions sur le suicide* in January, and in April the more widely known review of the *De l'Allemagne* itself.<sup>14</sup> The *Germany*, then, far from being the work exclusively responsible for its author's fame in America, owed much of its own success there to the reputation which she had previously achieved.

R. C. WHITFORD.

*University of Illinois.*

---

<sup>11</sup> *The Analectic Magazine*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia, 1816), vol. I, pp. 313-321 (Jan.-June, 1813). This was a translation of "Des femmes qui cultivent les lettres," the fourth chapter of Part II of *De la Littérature*.

<sup>12</sup> *Analectic Magazine*, II, 314-322.

<sup>13</sup> *The Analectic Magazine*, II, 186-208.

<sup>14</sup> *The Analectic Magazine*, III, 37-44, 284-308.